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MINEHEAD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S REPORT FOR 1954.

The Registrar General's figure for the population of the town is 7,410, the figure for 1953 being 7,333; for 1952, 7,237; and for 1951, 7,339. It is probable that during the summer holidays this figure is more than doubled. The seasonal increase usually commences in June and continues until September. There are also minor variations at Easter and Christmas. The large majority of the hotels, boarding houses and apartments close down for the winter months. The health of the community during the year was satisfactory.

Vital Statistics.

	Total.	M.	F.
Live Births - Legitimate.	76	32	44
Illegitimate.	4	1	3

Birth Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population 10.8.

	Total.	M.	F.
Deaths	100	48	52

Death Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population 13.4.

Death Rate of Infants under one year of age:- 0.

Water Supply.

This has been satisfactory throughout the year. The quantity was at all times sufficient to meet the demand. The main supply from Nutscale Reservoir with subsidiary supplies from Broadwood, Longwood, Longcombe and Periton caused no anxiety at any time. The use of the Broadwood supply is being gradually discontinued although at all times available in case of temporary shortage. The quality of the water supply to the town is satisfactory; samples of raw water were periodically sent for analysis. Of the 15 samples of treated water sent for analysis only 2 were not in all respects satisfactory. The chemical analysis of the water was satisfactory. No action was at any time called for respecting contamination and none was taken.

There were complaints from the public regarding the occasional discolouration of the water. Examination of samples of the discoloured water showed that the colouring matter was due to the presence of iron caused by the action of the acid water on the iron pipes. The flushing of the dead ends of the water carriage system caused the occasional and irregular appearance of the colouring matter in the water. It was found to be innocuous.

Certain structural alterations have taken place at Nutscale. The dam is in process of completion and a new installation of an automatic cylinder change-over panel for chlorinator is complete and promises to work out successfully.

The Alcombe and Periton supplies are now dealt with by the chlorination process in order to minimise any possibility of casual infection of the catchment areas.

Further undertakings in the near future include a six inch main in Cher to replace the three inch main.

Swimming Pools.

There is one swimming pool situated on the sea front which is privately owned. This pool is filled with sea water which undergoes chlorination before being admitted to the pool. The filtration and chlorination plant are under skilled management and the engineer is on duty the whole of the time the bath is in operation. Frequent testing indicates that the water carried the necessary amount of residual chlorine to ensure a safe bathing water. Samples submitted from time to time were all found to be satisfactory.

Sewage disposal.

The whole of the Urban District is served by a sewage disposal system.

The whole of this system is under review and has been repeatedly before the Council during the year. I am assured that the matter of the sewage is to receive urgent priority during the coming year. It will be a matter of relief to the population of the town to know that the increasing difficulties associated with this question are to be dealt with in a satisfactory and extensive manner.

Practically all the houses in the district are served by water-closet accommodation, only 16 are not so served. Of these, 12 are pail closets and 4 earth closets.

The public cleansing is done by direct labour. During the season there is a considerable increase in the quantity of litter created by the visitors to the town and sea front. This is a question which will have to be dealt with more effectively in the future as if the increase continues unabated insanitary conditions are bound to occur. I shall have more suggestions to make in this direction after the coming year. The controlled tip which deals with the refuse beyond Quay West is in a much better condition and the disinfecting plant now used much more efficacious.

Foods.

No outbreaks of food poisoning have been reported during the year.

Meat and other Foods.

Meat is prepared for human food at the Minehead Abattoir from where it is distributed throughout the districts of Minehead, Watchet and Williton. So far as is practical all animals are inspected before slaughter and all carcasses and offal are inspected in accordance with instructions laid down in Memo.62 Foods, and appropriate action taken where required.

All places where food is prepared, etc., including the Abattoir, shops, stalls and vehicles, are inspected from time to time and action taken as required. Generally the cleanliness of these establishments and vehicles is satisfactory.

MEAT INSPECTION 1954.

CARCASES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED.

			Cattle excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number Killed	..	..	578	169	369	6074	2306
Number Inspected	..	..	578	169	369	6074	2306
All diseases except Tuberculosis. Whole Carcases	..	..	4	2	5	35	12
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned			264	227	3	201	59
Percentage of number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis.			44.810	73.964	2.168	3.606	2.819
Tuberculosis only. Whole Carcases	..	..	3	1	0	0	2
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned			14	29	2	0	195
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis.			3.281	8.284	0.542	0	77329

Milk.

The milk supply during the year was satisfactorily maintained. Samples taken from time to time that did not come up to the required standard were investigated and the cause ascertained and remedied.

- (a) The total number of Registered Distributors was 3.
- (b) The total number of Registered Dairy Premises was 3.
- (c) The number of supplementary licences issued to distributors whose dairy is outside this area was Nil.

Manufacture of Ice Cream.

The regulations governing this manufacture and the requirements implicit in them have tended to restrict the preparation of ice cream to the large wholesale houses. The distributors find it more profitable to purchase their ice cream in bulk.

Eight samples of ice cream submitted for examination during the summer showed that the bulk of the ice cream was of a relatively high grade.

Housing.

The total number of houses is 2,442. 34 houses were erected during the year; 9 by the Local Authority and 25 by private enterprise. 43 houses were in course of erection at the close of the year.

91 houses are reported as unsatisfactory in that two families are occupying the same house. This figure includes a number of persons living in furnished rooms.

The total number of applicants for Council Houses at the end of the year was approximately 300.

The number of Post War houses erected up to the 31st December, 1954 was :-

By Local Authority	-	202
By Private Enterprise	-	70

Factories Act.

The Register of Factories is now complete and the Form 572 relating to inspections and defects is attached to this report. *(For the Ministry of Labour & National Service).*

Overcrowding.

Four cases of overcrowding were reported and were satisfactorily dealt with.

Infectious Diseases.

Sporadic cases of notifiable diseases were reported from time to time, but not in sufficient numbers as to justify the designation of an epidemic.

Cases requiring institutional isolation are sent to Taunton Isolation Hospital.

Disinfection of premises after infectious disease is carried out by the Local Authority, also after cases of an unhygienic or unpleasant nature.

Tuberculosis.

There were 3 new cases of tuberculosis notified. There were 3 deaths.

Hospital.

The Minehead and West Somerset Hospital is entirely administered by the Bridgwater, Minehead and Butleigh Management Committee.

Local representation in the management of the Hospital exists in the House Committee of the Hospital, on which the town is represented. This Committee is responsible for the day to day supervision of the Institution and is empowered to make recommendations and representations to the Committee of Management. The Committee of Management is represented on the Committee by three of its members.

Ambulance Services.

During the year under review the ambulance services vested by the Ministry in the County Council have been carried out by the St. John Ambulance Brigade to the entire satisfaction of the community. Under the arrangement with the County Council the cost of the running and maintenance of the ambulances is the concern of the County Council. Three ambulances and two sitting case cars are based on the St. John Ambulance Headquarters and five full-time trained ambulance

drivers are maintained. The remainder of the Service, which includes all night work, is carried out by the local ambulance and nursing divisions. This part of the Service is voluntary and maintained with the financial support of the general public.

Clinics.

Clinics, with the exception of Infant Welfare, are now held at the Minehead and West Somerset Hospital.

Vital Statistics.

An analysis of the vital statistics shows that the total deaths registered were 100; in 1953 the number was 109.

The total live births were 80 compared with 76 the previous year.

With regard to the deaths occurring in age groups, 60 occurred over the age of 70, and of these 31 occurred between 70 and 80; 23 between 80 and 90 and 6 at 90 or over. It would seem that of the 100 deaths only 40 failed to reach the three score years and ten.

Nothing startling emerges from the consideration of the cause of death. Diseases of the circulatory system provide the highest number of deaths, 48, this being the same figure as last year. Of these 11 were due to coronary disease of the heart, a decrease of 5. Deaths due to vascular lesions of the nervous system were 13, a decrease of 4. There were no deaths attributable to the acute specific fevers. The total number of deaths from malignant disease of all organs was 23, an increase of 8. There were only 5 deaths due to respiratory disease.

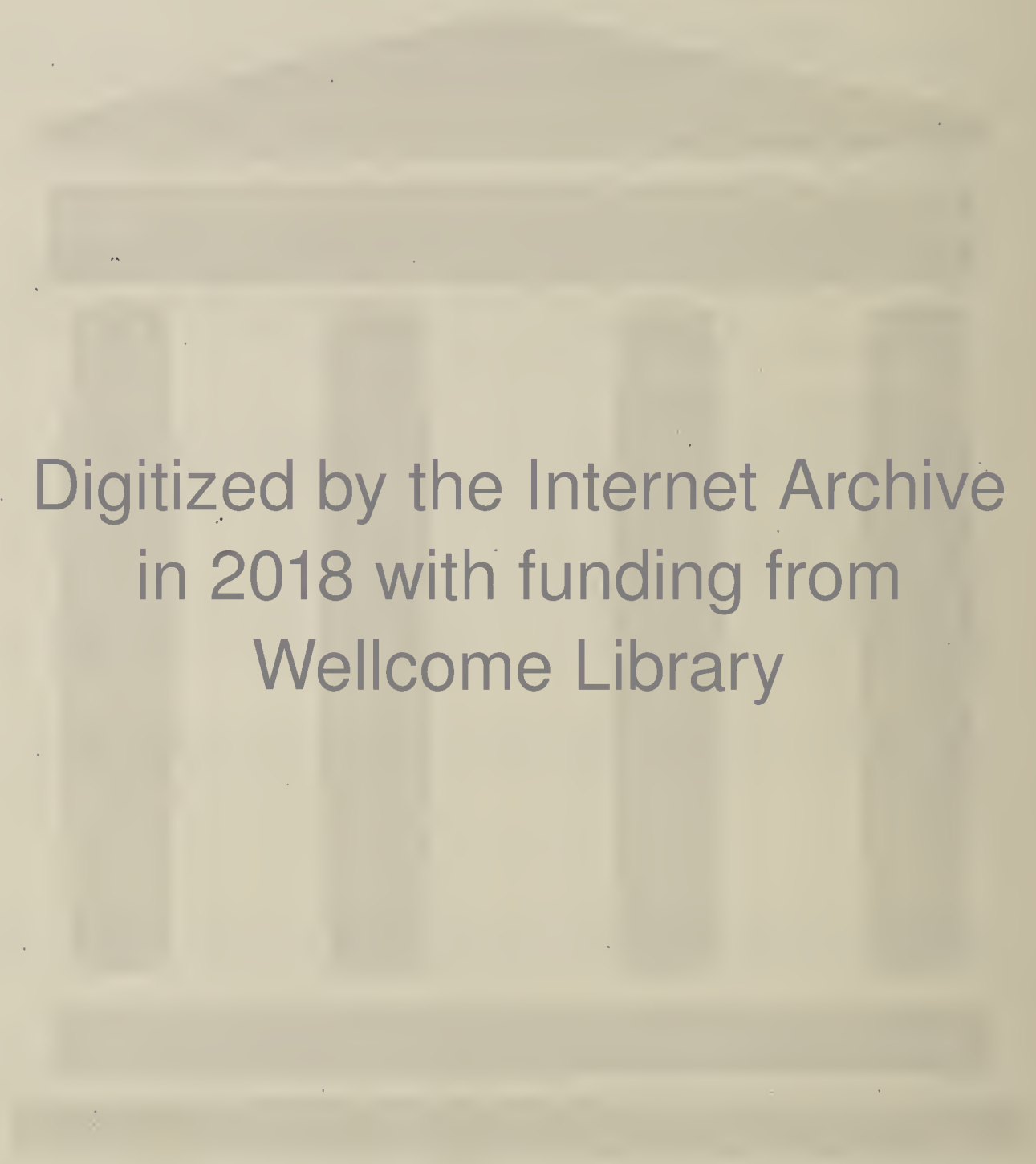
It will be seen that only 40 deaths occurred under the age of 70 and of the remaining 60, 29 occurred over the age of 80.

As will be seen from consideration of the various items making up this report the health of the town remains satisfactory.

The erection of new houses has continued at a slightly accelerated rate, 34 houses being erected during the year, 9 by the Local Authority and 25 by Private Enterprise.

The water supply is adequate for all the needs of the community. The storage is sufficient and since the inception of Nutscale Reservoir has not shown any sign of being otherwise.

To minimise any possible infection of the water supply by surface contamination of the catchment areas all the supplies are now chlorinated. Various minor alterations are being contemplated by your Surveyor to equalise the water pressure at various parts of the town. In my opinion the water supply of the town may be regarded as satisfactory both in quality and quantity.



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The sewage disposal system cannot be regarded as satisfactory. As I said in my last report the urgency of this vital adjunct to the health of the town will increase year by year. The matter is, I know, receiving your attention, but I would stress again that the growth of the town and the efficiency of the sewage should develop pari passu.

Another matter will probably demand your attention in the near future. I refer to the increasing quantity of litter that is left by visitors and motorists wherever they elect to pause or picnic. Much of this may be merely unsightly but a large percentage is definitely obnoxious and capable of becoming a menace to the public health.

It may possibly become a matter of legislation at a high level, but in the meantime it should have your consideration.

I should like to close with an appreciation of the Council's co-operation and patience in dealing with the matters that I have brought before them, and to my colleagues in its service my thanks for their courtesy and help in all those matters concerning the public health.

W. BAIN,

M.B., B.S., Lond.

Medical Officer of Health.

September, 1955.

